

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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How to Ditch Your Gadgets the Right Way

All of our homes have electronic gadgets. These gadgets include computers, TVs, DVD players, CD players, iPods, cell phones and keyboards. Unfortunately, they break down, become obsolete and cannot be repaired. So, what do we do with them now? We want to do the right thing and dispose of them properly. The question is how you do it— properly.

Since 2007, New Hampshire state law has banned the disposal of video display devices or e-waste in landfills and incinerators, meaning you cannot throw your computer monitor (CRT) or plasma screen in the trash. These types of waste contain toxic chemicals such as lead, cadmium and mercury that if improperly disposed of can contaminate our lakes and streams, drinking water, air and soil. The older CRTs can contain up to eight pounds of lead. The newer liquid crystal display TVs also contain toxic metals, such as mercury in the fluorescent tubes and lead in the soldering.

Since the ban has been in place, New Hampshire solid waste facilities have collected over four million pounds of e-waste per year.

Here are some of your options for properly recycling or disposing of your old or broken electronics.

- Computer manufacturers, such as Sony, and retailers, such as Staples, have established take-back or recycling programs, some free, some with a fee. Several retailers have established “swap out” programs where they will take away a television if you purchase a new one from them and have it delivered. Check with the retailer when purchasing a new item to see if they have such a program in place.
- Some retailers, such as Radio Shack, have cell phone drop-off boxes, where you can recycle your phone. Search the web, using the word “recycle cell phone” to find cell phone recycling programs that have drop off sites in your area. One website to try is “call2recycle” at <http://www.call2recycle.org/>.
- Your municipal recycling center or transfer station may take your electronics for a fee, or even for free. Check with your local transfer station for details.
- “Reconnect,” a partnership between Dell and Goodwill Industries International, enables consumers to responsibly recycle any brand of unwanted computers or computer accessories at no cost. Check the following link for more information on drop-off sites in your area: <http://reconnectpartnership.com/>
- Household hazardous waste collection days may be available in your community. If they take electronics at the event, there may be a charge. Call your town office for more information on these events, or go to <http://des.nh.gov> and select “Household Hazardous Waste” from the “A to Z List”.
- Your electronics may be able to be recycled, repaired or refurbished. Look in the yellow pages under “computer service and repair” for businesses near you.

Thank you for “ditching your gadgets” the right way. Remember, while waiting to bring your gadgets to a recycler or a disposal site, protect your health and the environment by storing the gadgets in a place where they will not be damaged or exposed to rain or snow.

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